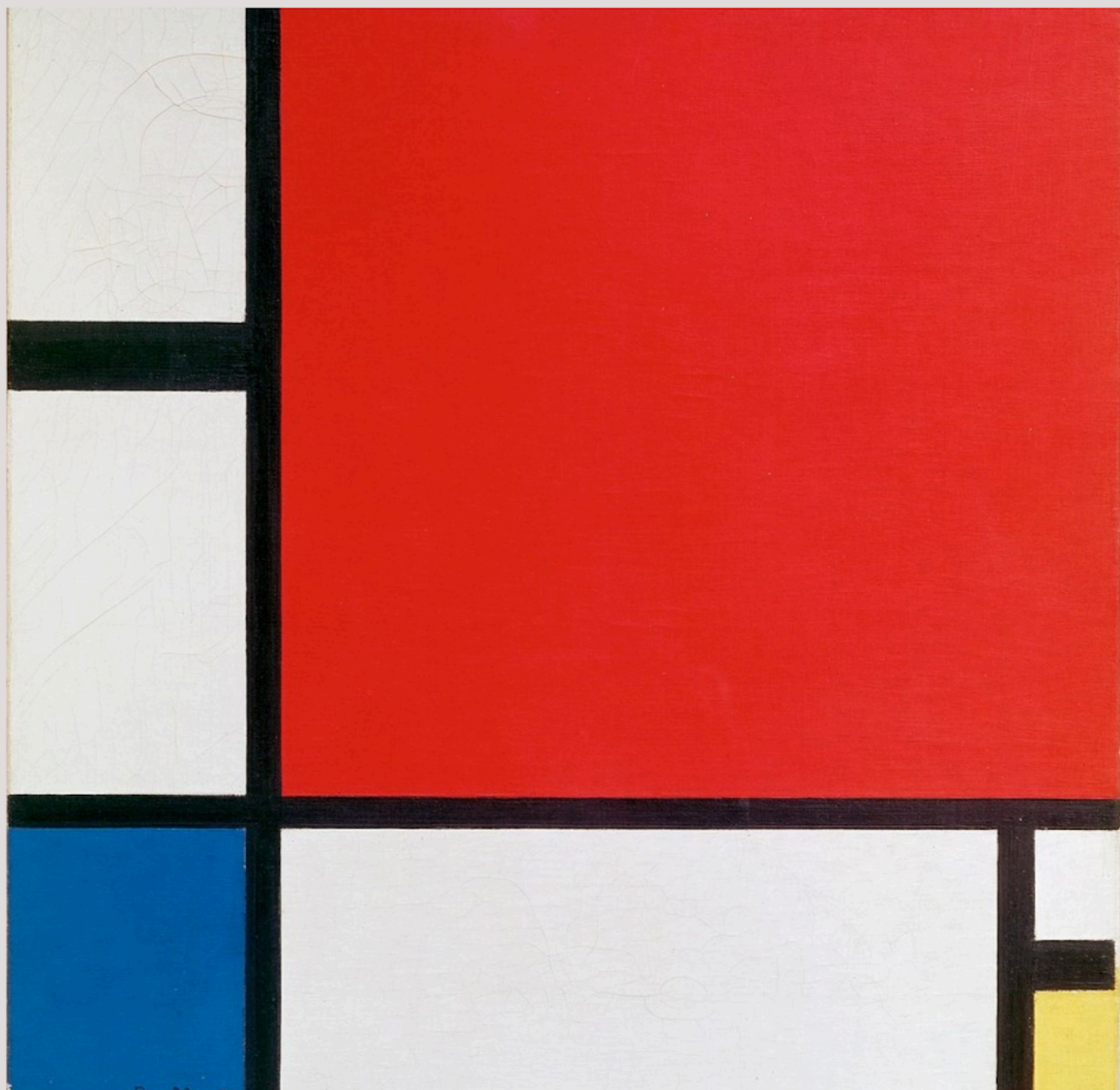


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ART ZINE

MOSTLY ABSTRACT ART



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Introduction

Abstract art challenges the way we see, feel, and interpret the world around us. Unlike traditional art forms that aim to represent reality, abstract art invites us into a space of pure expression—where color, shape, and composition take center stage. It breaks down visual language into its simplest elements, offering endless possibilities for meaning and interpretation.

This zine explores the evolution and impact of abstract art, from pioneers like Piet Mondrian to the spiritual influences of Theosophy on modern artists. We dive into why originality matters for new artists, how abstraction continues to shape contemporary creativity, and highlight key works that define this ever-expanding movement.

Whether you're an artist, a collector, or someone simply curious about abstraction, this zine serves as a guide to understanding and appreciating the power of non-representational art. Here, the focus isn't on what you see, but what you experience.

Let's begin.

Piet Mondrian

The Man Behind the Lines and Colors



Piet Mondrian was a Dutch artist known for his simple yet striking paintings of lines, squares, and primary colors. Even if you don't know his name, you've probably seen his work. His style, called neoplasticism, used only straight lines and basic colors—red, blue, yellow, black, and white. Mondrian believed that art should be pure and balanced, like a reflection of the world's harmony. His ideas influenced not only painting but also architecture, fashion, and graphic design.

Mondrian was born in the Netherlands in 1872. His full name was Pieter

Cornelis Mondriaan, but he later changed it to Piet Mondrian as part of his artistic identity. His father was a teacher, and young Mondrian showed an interest in art from an early age. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam, where he learned traditional painting techniques.

In his early years, Mondrian painted landscapes, windmills, and trees in a realistic style. His paintings during this time were influenced by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, similar to artists like Vincent van Gogh. But as he continued to grow as an artist, he started experimenting with different styles, looking for something new and unique.

The Journey Toward Abstraction

A turning point in Mondrian's career came when he discovered Cubism, a style developed by artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Cubism broke objects down into geometric shapes, and Mondrian was fascinated by this approach. He moved to Paris in 1911, where he embraced the style but gradually took it in a different direction.

Mondrian's paintings became more abstract over time. Instead of painting real-life objects, he focused on lines, shapes, and colors. He believed that reducing art to its simplest form could express a deeper truth about the universe. His goal was to create perfect balance and harmony in his compositions.

The Birth of Neoplasticism

By the 1920s, Mondrian had developed his signature style, which he called De Stijl, meaning "The Style" in Dutch. It was part of a broader artistic movement that aimed to create a universal visual language. Mondrian's version of De Stijl focused on a strict set of rules:

- Only horizontal and vertical lines
- Only primary colors (red, blue, and yellow) along with black, white, and gray
- No curves, no shading, no unnecessary details

One of his most famous paintings, *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (1930), perfectly represents this style. The painting consists of a white background divided by black lines, with blocks of red, blue, and yellow carefully placed to create balance.

Mondrian's art was deeply connected to his beliefs. He was influenced by theosophy, a spiritual movement that explored the idea of a higher, universal order. He saw his paintings as more

than just art—they were a way to bring order to a chaotic world.

Life in the United States and Broadway Boogie Woogie

In 1938, with World War II approaching, Mondrian left Europe and moved to London. Later, in 1940, he settled in New York City, where he found a vibrant and exciting atmosphere. He was inspired by the fast-paced energy of the city, its skyscrapers, and even its jazz music.

One of his last and most famous works, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-43), reflects this change. Unlike his earlier paintings, this piece has smaller squares and lines that seem to dance across the canvas. It captures the lively rhythm of New York's streets, resembling a map of the city. The name "Boogie Woogie" comes from a style of jazz music that was popular at the time, showing how much Mondrian was influenced by his surroundings.

Mondrian's Legacy

Piet Mondrian passed away in 1944, but his influence remains strong. His art inspired not just painters but also architects, designers, and fashion icons. His bold, simple style can be seen in everything from furniture to clothing. The famous Yves Saint Laurent Mondrian dress, designed in 1965, was directly inspired by his paintings.

Today, Mondrian's artworks are displayed in major museums around the world, and his ideas continue to inspire artists and designers. His belief in simplicity, balance, and harmony is still relevant in modern art and design.

Piet Mondrian may have started as a landscape painter, but he ended up changing the way we see art. His legacy is a reminder that sometimes, the simplest things—lines, colors, and shapes—can have the biggest impact.

Theosophy and Its Influence on Modern Art

Throughout history, artists have searched for deeper meaning in their work. Many have turned to philosophy, religion, and spirituality for inspiration. One of the most influential spiritual movements in modern art was Theosophy, a belief system that combined elements of Eastern and Western mysticism. Theosophy had a major impact on early abstract artists, including Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky, Hilma af Klint, and others. These artists believed that art could express deeper spiritual truths beyond the visible world. This article explores their work and how Theosophy shaped their artistic visions.

What is Theosophy?

Theosophy is a spiritual movement founded in the late 19th century by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian mystic. She wrote several books, including *The Secret Doctrine*, which introduced ideas about hidden knowledge, reincarnation, and the unity of all religions. Theosophy teaches that the physical world is only a small part of reality and that spiritual enlightenment can be reached through meditation and personal growth.

Theosophy became popular among artists who were looking for new ways to express ideas beyond the material world. The movement encouraged artists to explore abstraction, symbols, and colors that reflected spiritual energy. Let's look at some of the key artists influenced by these ideas.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944)



Kandinsky is considered one of the pioneers of abstract art. Before him, most art focused on realistic subjects like landscapes, people, and objects. Kandinsky believed that painting should not just show things we can see but also express emotions and spiritual energy.

Kandinsky was deeply influenced by Theosophy. He believed that different colors and shapes had their own meanings and vibrations. For example, he associated yellow with warmth and movement, while blue represented calmness and depth. In 1911, he wrote a book called *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, where he explained how art could be used to connect with higher spiritual realms.

His painting *Composition VII* is a great example of his ideas. It does not depict anything recognizable but is full of swirling colors and dynamic shapes, creating a sense of movement and energy. Kandinsky believed that just as music can express emotions without words, abstract art can express spiritual truths without needing a clear subject.

Hilma af Klint (1862–1944)

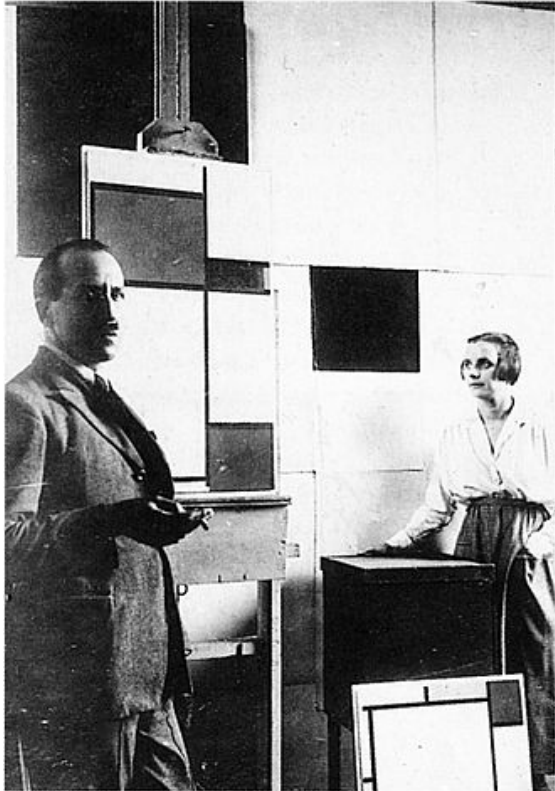


For many years, Hilma af Klint's work was unknown to the public, but today she is recognized as one of the first abstract artists. Born in Sweden, she was deeply involved in spiritualism and Theosophy. She even claimed that spirits guided her hand when she painted.

Af Klint created a series of works called *Paintings for the Temple*, which she believed were meant to be housed in a spiraling temple for meditation and spiritual connection. Her paintings often included geometric shapes, bright colors, and mystical symbols. Unlike many of her male counterparts, she did not seek fame and kept her paintings hidden for decades.

One of her most famous works, *The Ten Largest*, is a series of large, colorful paintings filled with organic shapes and symbols that represent different stages of life. Today, her art is seen as groundbreaking and is displayed in museums around the world.

Piet Mondrian (1872–1944)



Mondrian is best known for his geometric paintings made up of red, blue, and yellow squares separated by black lines. His style, called Neo-Plasticism, was influenced by Theosophy and his belief in universal harmony.

Mondrian started as a traditional painter, creating realistic landscapes. However, after studying Theosophy, he began experimenting with abstraction. He believed that nature's true essence could be represented using simple forms and primary colors. His most famous works, such as *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow*, are meant to reflect the perfect balance of forces in the universe.

He once said, "Art should be above reality, otherwise it would have no value for man." This shows how he saw painting as a tool for spiritual enlightenment rather than just representing the world as it appears.

Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935)

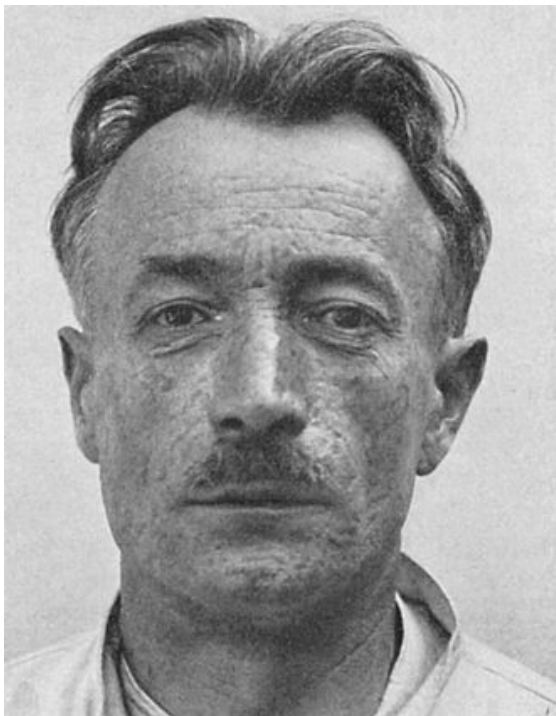


Malevich was a Russian artist who founded Suprematism, a movement focused on pure geometric shapes and colors. His most famous work, *Black Square*, is simply a black square on a white background, yet it carries deep spiritual meaning.

Like other Theosophical artists, Malevich believed that art should go beyond physical appearances. He saw the black square as a representation of

the infinite and the unknown. By removing all recognizable images, he wanted viewers to focus on the emotional and spiritual impact of the painting. His ideas were radical at the time, but they greatly influenced the future of abstract art.

František Kupka (1871–1957)



Kupka was a Czech artist who, like Kandinsky, explored the connection between color, shape, and spirituality. He was interested in Theosophy's teachings on vibration and energy. His paintings often looked like waves, spirals, and flowing lines that suggest movement and transformation.

His work *Amorpha: Fugue in Two Colors* is an example of his abstract style. It uses bright colors and dynamic forms to create a sense of rhythm, much like a piece of music.

Kupka believed that by using pure colors and shapes, he could create paintings that connected viewers to higher spiritual dimensions.

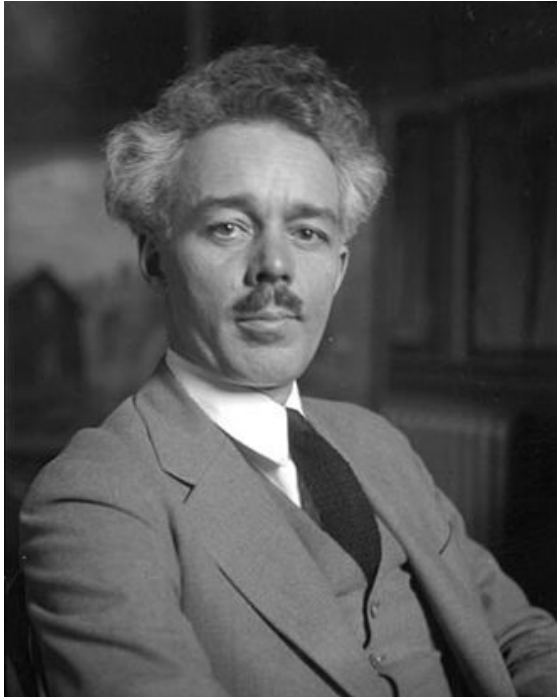
Agnes Pelton (1881–1961)



Pelton was an American painter known for her soft, glowing, mystical landscapes. Unlike the other artists mentioned, she did not focus on strict geometric abstraction. Instead, her paintings feature dreamlike light, symbols, and floating forms that represent spiritual enlightenment.

Pelton was part of the Transcendental Painting Group, a movement that aimed to express spiritual themes through art. One of her well-known paintings, *The Voice*, shows a luminous orb of light emerging from darkness, symbolizing divine guidance and awakening.

Lawren Harris (1885–1970)



Harris was a Canadian painter and a member of the Group of Seven, known for painting Canada's vast landscapes. As he became more interested in Theosophy, his work became increasingly abstract and spiritual.

His later paintings, such as *Mountain Forms*, use simplified shapes and

glowing light to create a sense of peace and transcendence. He believed that nature was sacred and that painting could reveal its hidden spiritual essence.

Conclusion

Theosophy had a profound influence on modern art, encouraging artists to explore new ways of expressing spiritual ideas. Instead of painting realistic scenes, these artists used color, shape, and abstraction to connect with deeper truths. Their work helped shape the future of modern art, leading to movements like Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism.

Today, their paintings continue to inspire people around the world, showing that art can be more than just decoration—it can be a pathway to the unseen, the mystical, and the divine. Whether through Kandinsky's musical colors, Mondrian's geometric harmony, or Hilma af Klint's spiritual visions, Theosophy helped open the door to a new world of artistic expression.

Why New Artists Must Offer Something Truly Original

Starting out as an artist can be exciting and full of possibilities. But it can also be frustrating when it feels like everything has already been done before. The truth is, the art world is full of talent, and many artists are competing for attention. To really succeed, it's not enough to be skilled at painting, drawing, or sculpting. It's also not enough to copy what has been done in the past or slightly change an old idea.

If an artist truly wants to make an impact, they have to bring something new. They have to find their own way of expressing ideas, emotions, or perspectives. This doesn't mean they have to invent a completely new style, but they do have to create something that stands out. Otherwise, they will blend into the crowd, and their work will be forgotten.

Let's explore why originality matters and how artists can develop their own unique voices.

Copying What Already Exists Won't Get You Far

It's natural to be inspired by famous artists. Many great artists in history borrowed techniques and ideas from others. But what makes them stand out is how they transformed those ideas into something fresh.

For example, Pablo Picasso didn't invent painting, but he and Georges Braque developed Cubism by breaking down shapes in a way no one had done before. Andy Warhol didn't invent portrait painting, but he turned everyday objects and celebrity images into bright, bold pop art that felt completely new.

Now, imagine if an artist today simply copied Picasso's style exactly as it was. It wouldn't have the same impact because it has already been done. The same goes for copying other movements like Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism, or Surrealism. If an artist only mimics the past, their work won't feel fresh or exciting.

The problem isn't learning from past styles—it's when artists don't push those ideas forward. People are drawn to art that feels alive and relevant to their time, not just a repeat of what they have already seen.

Being Original Means Being Yourself

A lot of people misunderstand originality. They think it means doing something weird just to stand out. But true originality comes from honesty—it comes from expressing ideas,

emotions, and stories in a way that feels real.

Think about artists like Frida Kahlo. Her self-portraits were powerful because they showed her real struggles and emotions. She didn't paint just to impress people; she painted her own truth. Another example is Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose graffiti-inspired paintings had raw energy because they reflected his personal life and views on society.

An artist doesn't have to paint their personal life to be original, but they do need to create work that feels real to them. This could mean using colors, symbols, or subjects that are meaningful to them rather than just following trends.

Artists who chase trends usually fade away quickly. But artists who develop their own voice create work that lasts because it connects with people on a deeper level.

Exploring New Materials and Techniques

Art isn't just about what you create—it's also about how you create it. Some of the most memorable artists in history became famous not just for their ideas but for the way they brought them to life.

For example, Ai Weiwei doesn't just paint pictures; he uses objects like bicycles, sunflower seeds, and old doors to make powerful statements

about human rights and freedom. Olafur Eliasson creates installations with light, mirrors, and water that make people feel like they've stepped into another world.

Artists today have more options than ever. Digital tools, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and even biological materials are opening up new ways to create. This doesn't mean every artist has to use technology, but they should always be thinking about how to push their work beyond what is expected.

Even within traditional painting or sculpture, there's room for innovation. Artists can experiment with unexpected textures, layering, or ways of presenting their work that make people see it differently.

Taking Risks and Accepting Failure

One of the biggest fears new artists have is failure. No one likes the idea of making something that people don't understand or appreciate. But taking creative risks is necessary if an artist wants to grow.

History is full of artists who were misunderstood at first. When Vincent van Gogh was alive, people didn't appreciate his paintings. Now, his work is considered some of the most important in art history. Marcel Duchamp shocked the world by putting a urinal in an art gallery, but his work ended up changing the definition of art forever.

If an artist is always playing it safe, they won't create anything memorable. It's okay to make mistakes. Sometimes, an idea doesn't work, but it leads to a better idea later. What matters is that artists keep pushing forward instead of getting stuck in their comfort zone.

Balancing Originality and Connection

Some artists worry that if they try to be too original, no one will understand their work. Others try so hard to be different that their art becomes confusing or meaningless. The best artists find a balance—they create something fresh while still making sure it connects with people.

Banksy is a great example of this. His graffiti art is unique, but it's also simple enough for anyone to understand. His messages about politics and society make people think, but they are also easy to relate to.

Another example is Kehinde Wiley, who paints portraits of modern Black subjects in the style of old European masterpieces. His work is fresh because it flips history on its head, but it's also familiar enough that people can appreciate the technique.

Artists should think about their audience—not in a way that limits them, but in a way that makes their art engaging. Art that is completely unapproachable is easy to ignore, but

art that speaks to people while offering something new is powerful.

The Power of Storytelling in Art

Art is more than just images—it's also about storytelling. Even abstract or conceptual art tells a story in its own way. People connect with art when they feel like it has something to say.

For example, Kara Walker's silhouette installations tell powerful stories about history, race, and power. Her art isn't just visually striking; it also carries deep meaning that makes people think.

Artists don't have to tell stories in a traditional way, but they should think about what their work communicates. Even color choices, shapes, and materials can be part of a larger message.

Always Growing and Changing

One mistake some artists make is finding one style and sticking to it forever. While consistency is important, being stuck can make an artist's work feel repetitive. The best artists are always evolving, learning, and experimenting.

Look at David Hockney—he started with traditional painting but later embraced digital drawing and iPad art.

He didn't abandon his artistic voice; he just found new ways to express it.

Artists should always be open to change. This doesn't mean they have to follow every new trend, but they should stay curious. Trying new materials, studying new ideas, and challenging themselves keeps their work fresh and exciting.

Final Thoughts: Make Art That Can't Be Ignored

For new artists, success isn't just about skill—it's about offering something that makes people stop and pay attention.

Recreating what has already been done won't leave a lasting impact. To stand out, an artist needs to take risks, be true to themselves, and push beyond what is expected.

Originality isn't about trying to be different just for the sake of it. It's about expressing something real in a way that hasn't been seen before. When artists focus on this, they create work that isn't just good—it's unforgettable.

Art Piece Spotlight



Hilma af Klint - Svanen (The Swan), No. 17, Group 9, Series SUW,
October 1914 – March 1915

Art Piece Spotlight



Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931) - Compositie VII: 'de drie Gratiën' (Composition VII: The Three Graces). Between 1 January 1917 and 9 May 1917.

Looking Ahead

Abstract art isn't just about lines, colors, or shapes—it's about ideas, emotions, and new ways of seeing. From the influence of Theosophy to the need for originality in modern artists, this zine has explored how abstraction continues to push artistic boundaries.

The beauty of abstract art lies in its openness. It doesn't demand a single interpretation, nor does it follow strict rules. Instead, it encourages curiosity, exploration, and personal connection. Whether it's Mondrian's precise geometry or the expressive spontaneity of contemporary creators, abstract art remains a space where creativity thrives without limits.

As you move forward, consider how abstraction fits into your own artistic perspective. What can you take from its history? How can it inspire new ideas? The world of abstract art is vast, and there's always more to discover.

Keep looking, keep questioning, and most importantly—keep creating.

Ole Gabrielsen

tumblr.com/gabrielsenacademyzine